

## REMARKS

Applicants appreciate the time taken by the Examiner to review proposed changes to the claims. In response to the Examiner's comments upon the review of the proposed changes, Applicants submit herewith amended claims 1-13 to overcome the rejection of such claims in view of U.S. Patent 5,917,930 (Kayani et al.).

In reviewing the proposed changes, the Examiner indicated that such changes would likely raise new issues requiring further searching, and a Request for Continued Examination would be required for the Examiner to enter and review the new claim amendments. As a result, Applicants submit herewith a Request for Continued Examination in order to remove the finality of the present rejection of claims 1-13 and for the Examiner to enter the amendments to claims 1-13 shown above.

It will be noted that only claims 1 and 7 were amended to overcome the Kayani et al. reference, and claims 2-6 and 8-13 were amended by removing the reference letters denoting the separator card and information carrier in order to place the claims more in conformance with U.S. claiming style. Applicants respectfully disagree that the amendment to claims 1 and 7 raise new issues requiring further searching, and further assert that the amendments to claims 1 and 7 merely make explicit that which was implicit in the claims as originally filed. It will be noted, however, that Applicants have filed the Request for Continued Examination in order to expedite the prosecution of the present application.

Turning to the Kayani et al. reference, and as discussed in the remarks in response to the preceding Office Action, the Kayani et al. reference fails to disclose or suggest the separator card and the least one information carrier of the present invention that are used in combination for processing sheet material in different successively

processed groups.

Kayani et al. disclose a method for processing sheet material by which different stacks of sheet material are separated by a separator card that includes information such as detailed account information or bar code information (col. 2, lines 62-66). Kayani et al. do not disclose or suggest separating the separator card and the information into at least a card and a carrier. Instead, as shown in Figs. 2 and 4 by Kayani et al., each separator card is clearly combined with information to form a single card that is identified with a particular group of sheet material.

In contrast to the teachings of Kayani et al., the separator card and information carrier of the present invention are separate from one another. By providing a separator card separate from the information carrier, the present invention has the added benefit of permitting more than one information carrier to be used per group of sheet material. It follows that when processing a group of sheet material, the group can be further subdivided according to a predetermined relationship or arbitrary division by dividing the cards into sub-groups with the information carriers.

Accordingly, in view of the above-observations, Kayani et al. fail disclose or suggest, the use of separator cards and information carriers that are separate from one another when processing sheet material in different successively processed groups. It follows that the teachings of Kayani et al. cannot be construed to anticipate claims 1-13. As a result, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this rejection.

In view of the amended claims and foregoing remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that claims 1-13 be allowed and the application be passed to issue.

Application No. 09/718,473  
Examiner: K. NGUYEN  
Art Unit: 2876

If any issues remain that may be resolved by a telephone or facsimile communication with the Applicants' Attorney, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the numbers shown below.

BACON & THOMAS, PLLC  
625 Slaters Lane, Fourth Floor  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314-1176  
Phone: (703) 683-0500

Respectfully submitted,



Date: June 3, 2003

JUSTIN J. CASSELL  
Attorney for Applicants  
Registration No. 46,205

S:\Producer\jek\STEINKOGLER - 718473\amendment with RCE.wpd